

**Remarks of Ambassador Harry K. Thomas, Jr.**  
**U.S. Embassy's Memorial Day Ceremony**  
**Manila American Cemetery & Monument**  
**May 30, 2010**

A pleasant day to all of you, to Undersecretary Adan, distinguished representatives of the Government and Armed Forces of the Republic of the Philippines; to those of you who represent civic, business and veterans groups; and to my distinguished colleagues from the Diplomatic and Consular Corps here today... *"Magandang Umaga!"*

I thank you all for joining us on this annual occasion and my first, as U.S. Ambassador to the Philippines. Memorial Day is the traditional day of recognizing the ultimate sacrifices fellow citizens have made since the birth of our nation. Memorial Day was first commemorated in the United States in 1868 after the American Civil War, and was originally called Decoration Day.

It was – and still is – a day to honor and remember those who have paid the price for our security and freedom. We honor and remember their sacrifices in the defense of our nation. We honor and remember the brave service members who have fallen in battle. Those we honor today no longer stand here with us on this earth. They have given their lives to something much bigger than themselves.

This Memorial Day we also commemorate of the 65th anniversary Manila's liberation. The strong Filipino people, in allegiance with the American soldiers, mounted a remarkably effective offensive against the oppressors. U.S. forces trained Philippine Scouts and brought thousands of American soldiers to help Filipinos in liberating their country.

They were determined. They were dedicated. They shared the same struggles to win the war. They labored in sweat and blood, day and night, during this hard-won battle that resulted in victory and a chance for the people of the Philippines to rebuild their own country. I wish to express my highest respect to these brave and heroic Filipino people, the American servicemen and all others who fought and died for during this battle. *"Saludo ako sa inyo!"*

But our words should not be the only way that we honor the memory of those brave young men and women who have died in the line of duty. Our actions can carry an even stronger message: As we remember our fallen today, let us console those who have been wounded, and those who are grieving.

Let us share with them the solemn pride that gives us all strength to carry on. Let us also honor them, support them, believe in them and hold them in our thoughts and prayers this Memorial Day.

This place is known as Manila American Cemetery. But, it is much more, it is a tribute to an entire generation of men AND women, American and Filipino, who fought our nations' enemies, defended the cause of liberty, and gave their lives in the cause of freedom.

On one hand, this beautiful place is a physical reminder of all that we have fought for. Yet at the same time, these tranquil grounds give us the opportunity to reflect on what we are now fighting for.

The Philippines has long been a friend and ally of the United States. Our shared commitment to freedom continues today as we face new challenges together. We are honored to continue this partnership today in fighting global terrorism, promoting peace and development, and addressing natural disasters.

Yes, there are some in this world who would rather make war, some who would rather reap destruction, and some who care more for themselves than for their families and communities. Standing here today amongst 17,000 graves of men and women, who sacrificed their own lives so that generations could live in freedom, how can we not carry on their mission? This is our calling, our destiny. The shore may be distant and the journey may be long, but we must remain confident that the future is within our reach.

Those of us here today – American, Filipino – have been blessed with veterans who have given their lives to ensure the strength and endurance of a free nation.

Today's men and women who serve are no less committed to protecting our nation. As General Douglas MacArthur said, "There is no security on this earth; there is only opportunity." Thanks to the sacrifices of our veterans, and to the bravery of our men and women in uniform, we have that opportunity.

We must have the courage to stand together and demand a world where our children can live in peace and freedom. *"Mabuhay kayong lahat!"*

In this way, we honor the brave citizens who stood shoulder to shoulder and laid down their lives for freedom. May we always embrace them. And, may we remain faithful to who they were and what they fought for.

*Maraming Salamat!*